

Healthy eaters seek midweek motivation

It's known as Hump Day – the point in the week when you've made it through the uphill part, but the weekend is still two days away.

But Wednesday could soon be renamed Health Day, as it's also when the urge for more wholesome foods kicks in, according to Waitrose research.

The retailer discovered that consumers are increasingly looking for midweek motivation, with the highest number of internet searches for healthy foods and recipes taking place on Wednesdays.

Out of the 183,000 people who asked waitrose.com for 'healthy eating' options between January and June this year, 31% did so on a

Wednesday, compared to only 13% on a Saturday.

And of the 145,000 who typed in 'healthy recipes', 21% did so on a Wednesday, while on Saturday the figure was just 12%.

The statistics also show that 'healthy eating' searches at waitrose.com have risen by 30% over last year.

The retailer's nutrition and health manager Moira Howie says: 'We've long suspected people's motivation for healthy eating can reach a low point by the middle of the week.'

'Our figures show many are now looking for inspiration to avoid the midweek slump and to keep them going until the weekend.'

News in brief

Flight scanner He may have seen some of the world's most exotic creatures, but Sir David Attenborough reveals that one of his favourite pastimes is watching butterflies. The broadcaster is urging people to get involved in the annual Big Butterfly Count survey, which runs until 12 August.



WING MAN Butterfly supporter David Attenborough

On the boil Homelessness charity Centrepoin is asking people to hold fundraising parties to create a 'soupathon' this November. It hopes 30,000 bowls of broth will be served up by 'souper troupers', who can download a starter pack at centrepoin.org.uk/bigbroth.

Non to au naturel Plans for a new nudist beach in Belgium have been blocked by wildlife conservationists who say sexual activity in the dunes could scare off rare birds. The Flemish Agency for Nature and Woodland believes the habitat of crested larks at Westende could be damaged by naked bathers' 'fringe activities'.

My week

Alvin Hall



The TV finance expert does some solitary time and relives life down on the farm



Slow days bring singular pleasure

The luxury of having a week when both my work and social lives are slow is a rare experience for me.

Typically, there's always 'music to play, people to see, places to go' to borrow the lyrics of a favourite song. So did I sit at my computer sending emails and text messages to friends asking if they were available? No! What made this week special was that I had time to indulge in a few pleasures I really enjoy doing by myself.

A few days during the week I went to see movies in the morning rather than in the evening when I'm likely to nod off. Going to the earliest showing is often like attending a private screening. One day there were only four other people in the cinema. I chose the perfect centre seat in a row where no one else was

sitting. Bliss! And someone else was paying the air-conditioning bill.

Long walks – sometimes six or seven miles – are another solitary delight. I particularly like walking in cities. I set off before the day got too hot – sometimes right after seeing a movie. Some days I chose a route I know well. I discovered a little passageway I had never noticed or used, new shops, new buildings being constructed and fascinating street styles of dress among young people. On other days my route was through neighbourhoods or parts of New York I didn't know.

As soon as I knew it was going to be a slow week, I began scanning the theatre and entertainment listings in the newspapers and online, looking for an interesting, well-reviewed show that was closing. One

of my greatest enjoyments when alone is going to a final performance, including that of a star in a lead role. I discovered how good this can be decades ago when I attended the last night of *A Chorus Line* on Broadway. Raw emotions poured from actors in a way I had never seen, permeating my entire being. It was deeply affecting and richly magical.

There is usually one randomly located seat somewhere in the venue. Except for the dent it sometimes puts in my budget, the pleasure I get far outweighs my money anxiety – which dissipates, turning into a warm inner glow of joy when the single ticket is in my hands. With this, the best of all treats, I added some transformative, uplifting magic to my week that resonated even into the following one.

Garnering happy memories at the farmers' market

Every week, mostly on Saturdays, I grab my shopping bag and go to a farmers' market. The deep satisfaction I get from this ritual is directly related to my having grown up on a smallholding.

Seeing the freshly harvested produce and catching the wondrous

odours prompts so many flashbacks: the earthy smell of digging new potatoes using a hoe and my hands, the scent of the trees while picking plums and peaches.

Returning home I use the ingredients to recreate dishes full of memories.

My grandmother's fresh

tomato, corn and okra stew was what we ate for many Sunday dinners.

As a child, I always imagined that cool cucumber and lettuce salad tasted like the perfect colour green.

And there's the fresh fruit I always seem to buy too much of. This

bit of excess is my quiet way of remembering a dear friend. If I don't eat it all, I'll turn what's left into a cobbler, using my late friend's recipe handwritten on a three by five-inch card more than 20 years ago as a little 'happy summer' gift. It just keeps on giving.